Please amend claims 1, 14, 25, 43-62, 64, 66, 68 and 70-72 consistent with the following listing of the claims:

1. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of another user in the first user group and a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, a method comprising:

after said e-mail message has been ~~originated~~ composed and sent via a standard messaging protocol by an originating user of the first user group, directing the e-mail message onto an e-mail enhancement path, including (i) receiving the e-mail message at said first server, (ii) altering the e-mail message, and (iii) directing the altered e-mail message to a second server located on the e-mail enhancement path;

adding additional rich media content to said e-mail message using the e-mail enhancement path to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, directing the enhanced e-mail message from the e-mail enhancement path to the intended recipient.

2. (canceled)

3. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving includes using TCP/IP socket communication.

4. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving includes using direct API access.

5. (canceled)

6. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said e-mail message includes a header section, which contains information regarding the originating user and the intended recipient, and wherein said altering the e-mail message includes separating and modifying the header section in a predetermined way.

7. (Previously amended) The method of claim 6 wherein said separating and modifying the header section includes parsing and temporarily storing the originating user and intended recipient information contained in the header section in a designated file separate from the e-mail message.

8. (Previously amended) The method of claim 6 wherein said modifying the header section in said predetermined way includes

inactivating said information regarding the originating user and intended recipient contained in the header section, and

adding an alternate header section containing active information regarding an alternate sender and an alternate message recipient.

9. (Previously amended) The method of claim 8 wherein said inactivating includes adding a predetermined prefix to the originating user and intended recipient information contained in the header section such that said information is inactivated.

10. (Previously amended) The method of claim 8 wherein said adding the alternate header section includes specifying said second server as the alternate message recipient.

11. (Previously amended) The method of claim 8 wherein said directing the enhanced message to the intended recipient includes

deleting the alternate header section, and

reactivating the originating user and intended recipient information contained in the header section of the e-mail message.

12. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said directing the altered e-mail message to the second server includes using TCP/IP socket communication.

13. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said directing the e-mail message onto the e-mail enhancement path includes adding a request for additional rich media content to the e-mail message.

14. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, a method comprising:

after said e-mail message has been ~~originated~~ composed and sent via a standard messaging protocol by an originating user of the first user group, directing the e-mail message onto an e-mail enhancement path;

adding additional rich media content to said e-mail message using the e-mail enhancement path to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, directing the enhanced e-mail message from the e-mail enhancement path to the intended recipient including adding a request for additional rich media content to the e-mail message and adding said

request for additional rich media content to said e-mail message includes providing a validation of the request such that said additional rich media content is added to said e-mail message responsive to said validation.

15. (Previously amended) The method of claim 14 wherein said adding the request for additional rich media content further includes inserting one or more reference tags into said e-mail message.

16. (Previously amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said providing the validation of the request for additional rich media content includes assigning a desired set of rules for said validation, and generating the validation according to the desired set of rules.

17. (Previously amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said inserting one or more reference tags into said e-mail message includes adding a message ID tag for identifying the e-mail message, which message ID tag is unique to said e-mail message.

18. (Previously amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said inserting one or more reference tags into said e-mail message includes adding a group ID tag for identifying the e-mail message as being sent by said first user group.

19. (Previously amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said inserting one or more reference tags into said e-mail message includes adding a template ID tag for identifying the additional rich media content to be added to the e-mail message.

20. (Previously amended) The method of claim 19 wherein said adding the template ID tag is performed responsive to a specified action taken by the originating user.

21. (Previously amended) The method of claim 19 wherein said first user group is subject to control at an administrative level, and wherein said adding the template ID tag is performed responsive to an administrative selection rather than responsive to action taken by the originating user.

22. (Previously amended) The method of Claim 15 further comprising recording said reference tags in a database.

23. (Previously amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said e-mail message includes a header section, which contains information regarding the originating user and the intended recipient, and wherein said inserting one or more reference tags into said e-mail message includes adding one or more of said reference tags to the header section of the e-mail message.

24. (Previously amended) The method of claim 15 wherein said e-mail message includes a header section, which contains information regarding the originating user and the intended recipient, and wherein

said inserting one or more reference tags into said e-mail message includes adding one or more of said reference tags to the e-mail message outside of the header section.

25. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, and said messaging system further defines an in-coming e-mail message path to each user of the first user group from the first server at least for receiving an external e-mail message originating outside the first user group and directed to one or more of the users of the first user group a method comprising:

after said e-mail message has been ~~originated~~ composed and sent via a standard messaging protocol by an originating user of the first user group, directing the e-mail message onto an e-mail enhancement path by routing the e-mail message to an out-going message path, which includes the enhancement path, and which includes at least one different process as compared to the incoming e-mail message path;

adding additional rich media content to said e-mail message using the e-mail enhancement path to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, directing the enhanced e-mail message from the e-mail enhancement path to the intended recipient.

26. (Previously amended) The method of claim 25 wherein said routing the e-mail message to an outgoing message path includes directing the e-mail message through a second server, which second server is outside of the in-coming e-mail message path.

27. (Previously amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said adding additional rich media content to the e-mail message includes creating one or more rich media templates to serve as said additional rich media content.

28. (Previously amended) The method of claim 27 wherein said creating one or more templates includes implementing a set of computer code compatible with the Internet, said set of computer code including instructions for displaying specified rich media content.

29. (Previously amended) The method of claim 28 wherein said creating one or more rich media templates further includes adding an insertion tag for identifying a point in said rich media template at which point at least a portion of said e-mail message is to be inserted into the rich media template.

30. (Original) The method of claim 28 wherein said set of computer code is in HTML.

31-42. (Canceled)

43. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

after said email message has been ~~originated~~ composed by an originating user of the first user group, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message and ~~placing~~ sending the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol;

directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

forwarding the e-mail message to a second location outside the firewall;

at the second location, adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

44. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

after said e-mail message has been ~~originated~~ composed and sent by an originating user of the first user group via a standard messaging protocol, directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

forwarding the e-mail message to a second location outside the firewall;

at the second location, adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

45. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the

Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

prior to sending the e-mail message from a Mail Transport Agent (MTA) via a standard messaging protocol, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message and placing the email message en route to the intended recipient using the MTA, thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content according to a predetermined set of rules;

forwarding the e-mail message to a second location outside the firewall;

at the second location, adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

46. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

~~placing~~ sending said e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol, thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content according to a predetermined set of rules;

forwarding the e-mail message to a second location outside the firewall;

at the second location, adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

47. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a

firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message ~~and~~ then placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol, thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

forwarding the e-mail message, after said providing the validation, to a second location inside the firewall;

at the second location, selectively adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

48. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

~~placing~~ sending said e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol,~~;~~ thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

forwarding the e-mail message, after providing the validation, to a second location inside the firewall;

at the second location, selectively adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

49. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message ~~and~~ then placing the email message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol, thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the e-mail

message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content according to a predetermined set of rules;

forwarding the e-mail message to a second location inside the firewall;

at the second location, selectively adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

50. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a method comprising:

placing said e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol, thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

at the first location, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message and providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content according to a predetermined set of rules;

forwarding the e-mail message to a second location inside the firewall;

at the second location, selectively adding the desired additional rich media content to said e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

thereafter, redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

51. (Currently amended) In multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

means for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message ~~and~~ then placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol, ~~means for~~ thereby directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

means for receiving the e-mail message at the first location, for identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message and for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content, said identifying means being located inside the firewall;

means for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to the validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message, said receiving means being located outside the firewall;

and

means for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

52. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

means for placing said e-mail message en route to the intended recipient, using a standard messaging protocol;

means for directing the e-mail message to a first location inside the firewall;

means for receiving the e-mail message at the first location, for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the received e-mail message and for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content, said identifying means being located inside the firewall;

means for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to the validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message, said receiving means being located outside the firewall; and

means for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

53. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a first arrangement for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message ~~and for~~ then placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol;

a second arrangement located within the firewall for selectively receiving the e-mail message within the firewall, for identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message and for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content; and

a third arrangement for selectively adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message including the desired additional rich media content, said third arrangement being located outside the firewall and configured for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

54. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a first arrangement for placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol;

a second arrangement located within the firewall for receiving the e-mail message, for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the received e-mail message and for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content; and

a third arrangement for selectively adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message including the desired additional rich media content, said third arrangement being located outside the firewall and configured for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

55. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a first enhancement configuration within the firewall, said first enhancement configuration being configured for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message, then placing the email message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol, receiving the e-mail message within the firewall, identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message, providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content, and directing the received e-mail message to a predetermined location outside the firewall; and

a second enhancement configuration located at said predetermined location, said second enhancement configuration being configured for adding the desired additional rich media content to the forwarded e-mail message, responsive to the validation, to produce an enhanced e-mail message, and redirecting the enhanced e-mail message from the second enhancement server to the intended recipient.

56. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user

interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a first enhancement configuration within the firewall, said first enhancement configuration being configured for placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol, receiving the e-mail message within the firewall, adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the received e-mail message, providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content, and directing the received e-mail message to a predetermined location outside the firewall; and

a second enhancement configuration located at said predetermined location, said second enhancement configuration being configured for adding the desired additional rich media content to the forwarded e-mail message, responsive to the validation, to produce an enhanced e-mail message, and redirecting the enhanced e-mail message from the second enhancement server to the intended recipient.

57. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

means for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message ~~and~~ then for placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol;

means located within the firewall for receiving the e-mail message, for identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message and for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content; and

means located within the firewall for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message and for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

58. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

means for placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol;

means located within the firewall for receiving the e-mail message, for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the received e-mail message and for providing a validation of the request for

desired additional rich media content; and

means located within the firewall for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message and for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

59. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a first arrangement for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message ~~and for~~ then placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol;

a second arrangement for selectively receiving the e-mail message within the firewall;

a third arrangement for identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message and for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

a fourth arrangement for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message including the desired additional rich media content; and

a fifth arrangement for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

60. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a first arrangement for placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard messaging protocol;

a second arrangement for selectively receiving the e-mail message within the firewall;

a third arrangement for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the received email message and for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

a fourth arrangement for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message including the desired additional rich

media content; and

a fifth arrangement for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

61. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a first enhancement configuration within the firewall, said first enhancement configuration being configured for adding a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message, placing the email message en route to the intended recipient via a standard messaging protocol, receiving the e-mail message within the firewall, identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message, providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content, and directing the received e-mail message to a predetermined location inside the firewall; and

a second enhancement configuration located at said predetermined location, said second enhancement configuration being configured for adding the desired additional rich media content to the forwarded e-mail message, responsive to the validation, to produce an enhanced e-mail message, and redirecting the enhanced e-mail message from the second enhancement server to the intended recipient.

62. (Currently amended) A computer program arrangement in a computer readable medium for use in a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may send an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said computer program arrangement comprising:

first instructions for directing the e-mail message to a predetermined location after said e-mail message has been ~~originated~~ composed and sent from a Mail Transport Agent ("MTA") by an originating user of the first user group via a standard messaging protocol;

at the predetermined location, second instructions for adding additional rich media content to said email message to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

third instructions for directing the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

63. (Original) The computer program arrangement of claim 62 wherein said first, second and third instructions are distributed at least among the first user group and the first server.

64. (Currently amended) A computer program arrangement in a computer readable medium for use in a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may send an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, said computer program arrangement comprising:

first instructions for receiving the e-mail message within the firewall after said e-mail message has been ~~originated~~ composed and sent, using a standard messaging protocol, by an originating user of the first user group, said e-mail message including a request for desired additional rich media content;

second instructions for identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message;

third instructions for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

fourth instructions for forwarding the received e-mail message to predetermined location outside the firewall;

at the predetermined location, fifth instructions for adding the desired additional rich media content to the forwarded e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

sixth instructions for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

65. (Original) The computer program arrangement of claim 64, wherein said messaging system further includes a second server located at the predetermined location, and wherein said first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth instructions are distributed at least among the first user group and the first and second servers.

66. (Currently amended) A computer program arrangement in a computer readable medium for use in a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may ~~send~~ compose an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, said computer program arrangement comprising:

first instructions for receiving the e-mail message within the firewall after said e-mail message has been ~~originated~~ composed and sent using a standard messaging protocol by an originating user of the first user group, said e-mail message including a request for desired additional rich media content;

second instructions for identifying the request for desired additional rich media content in the received e-mail message;

third instructions for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content;

fourth instructions for forwarding the received e-mail message to a predetermined location inside the firewall;

at the predetermined location, fifth instructions for adding the desired additional rich media content to the forwarded e-mail message responsive to said validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message; and

sixth instructions for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

67. (Original) The computer program arrangement of claim 66 wherein said first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth instructions are distributed at least among the first user group and the first server.

68. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may send an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, a configuration comprising:

means for allowing an originating user of the e-mail message to add a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message before the e-mail message is sent by the originating user via a standard messaging protocol, for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content according to a set of desired criteria, and for directing the e-mail message to a specified location; and

means for performing additional processing located at the specified location configured for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message, responsive to said validation, to produce an enhanced e-mail message, and for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

69. (Original) The e-mail messaging system of claim 68 further including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server and wherein said predetermined location is situated outside of the firewall.

70. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may send an e-mail message, said e-mail message being originated composed and sent by an originating user via a standard messaging protocol, and the e-mail message including a body, which contains a portion of the e-mail message viewable by the originating user, and for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

means for allowing the originating user to add a reference tag to the e-mail message before the e-mail message has been originated by the originating user sent, which reference tag is positioned outside of the body of the e-mail message, and for directing the e-mail message, including the reference tag, to a specified

location outside of the firewall; and

at the specified location, means for adding additional rich media content to the body of the e-mail message, responsive to the reference tag, to produce an enhanced e-mail message, and for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

71. (Currently amended) The e-mail messaging system of claim 70 wherein said preprocessing means further includes means for validating the reference tag according to a set of desired criteria after the e-mail message, including the reference tag, has been ~~originated by the originating user~~ sent.

72. (Currently amended) In a multi-user e-mail messaging system interfaced through the Internet and including at least a first user group sharing at least a first server, which first server is, in turn, interfaced to the Internet such that any user of the first user group may send an e-mail message for transfer to an intended recipient selected as at least one of (i) another user in the first user group and (ii) a remote user interfaced to the Internet by a connection other than said first server, said messaging system including a firewall surrounding said first user group and said first server, a configuration comprising:

a local e-mail server system located within the firewall and including an e-mail client plug-in for allowing an originating user of the first user group, which originating user ~~originates~~ composes said e-mail message, to add a request for desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message prior to sending the e-mail message using a standard messaging protocol, a local enhancement server for providing a validation of the request for desired additional rich media content according to a set of predetermined criteria after the e-mail message, including the request for desired additional rich media content, has been ~~originated~~ sent by the originating user of the first user group, and also for directing the e-mail message, including the request for desired additional rich media content, to a predetermined location outside of the firewall; and

an external enhancement server at the predetermined location for adding the desired additional rich media content to the e-mail message responsive to the validation to produce an enhanced e-mail message, and for redirecting the enhanced e-mail message to the intended recipient.

73-76. (canceled)

Please add new claims 77-105 listed below.

77. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein directing the e-mail message onto the e-mail enhancement path occurs after the e-mail message has been composed and sent via the standard messaging protocol of Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

78. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein directing the e-mail message onto the e-mail enhancement path occurs after the e-mail message has been composed and sent via the standard messaging protocol such that the e-mail message cannot thereafter be modified by the originating user.

79. (New) The method of claim 14, wherein directing the e-mail message onto the e-mail enhancement path occurs after the e-mail message has been composed and sent via the standard messaging protocol of Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

80. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein directing the e-mail message onto the e-mail enhancement path occurs after the e-mail message has been composed and sent via the standard messaging protocol of Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

81. (New) The method of claim 43, wherein sending the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient comprises using the standard messaging protocol of Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

82. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein directing the e-mail message to the first location inside the firewall occurs after the e-mail message has been composed and sent via the standard messaging protocol of Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

83. (New) The method of claim 45, wherein adding the request for desired additional rich media content occurs after the e-mail message has been sent via the standard messaging protocol of Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

84. (New) The method of claim 46, wherein sending the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using the standard messaging protocol comprises utilizing Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

85. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using a standard message protocol comprises utilizing Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

86. (New) The method of claim 48, wherein sending the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using the standard messaging protocol comprises utilizing Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

87. (New) The method of claim 49, wherein placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using the standard messaging protocol comprises utilizing Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

88. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein placing the e-mail message en route to the intended recipient using the standard messaging protocol comprises utilizing Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

89. (New) The configuration of claim 51, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

90. (New) The configuration of claim 52, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

91. (New) The configuration of claim 53, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

92. (New) The configuration of claim 54, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

93. (New) The configuration of claim 55, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

94. (New) The configuration of claim 56, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

95. (New) The configuration of claim 57, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

96. (New) The configuration of claim 58, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

97. (New) The configuration of claim 59, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

98. (New) The configuration of claim 60, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

99. (New) The configuration of claim 61, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

100. (New) The configuration of claim 62, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

101. (New) The configuration of claim 63, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

102. (New) The configuration of claim 66, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

103. (New) The configuration of claim 68, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

104. (New) The configuration of claim 70, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").

105. (New) The configuration of claim 72, wherein the standard messaging protocol comprises Simple Mail Transfer Protocol ("SMTP").